



Director of
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LIBERIA: Request for US Support

//Liberian Foreign Minister Dennis arrived in the US yesterday to present his government's view of the Easter weekend riots in Monrovia and to seek a symbolic gesture of US support for Liberia.//

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Liberia will view the US response as a test of the "special relationship" between the two countries. The Liberians want assurances of support and will ask for additional financial assistance to enhance internal stability. Other moderate, pro-Western African countries, which see Liberia as a US client, will also be watching the US response.

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//The riots have shaken Liberia's conservative ruling elite, damaged the economy, underscored weaknesses in the security forces, and generated concern about the country's stability. President Tolbert regards the riots as part of a Soviet-backed attempt by Liberian leftists to overthrow the regime, but the evidence indicates that, while Liberian dissidents organized the initial protests, the violence that followed was spontaneous.//

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[redacted] The legislature has given the President emergency powers for one year enabling him to detain for 30 days anyone suspected of endangering state security. Tolbert also may soon reorganize his cabinet and military hierarchy.//

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The security situation in Monrovia remains quiet, although there are rumors of student demonstrations planned for this weekend. The curfew has been removed and the contingent of Guinean troops, which the regime requested during the riots and held in reserve, may be sent home next week unless new trouble develops.

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MAURITANIA: Sahara Policy

//High-level diplomatic contacts under way between Mauritania and the others involved in the Western Sahara conflict--Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and the Polisario Front--suggest that the new Mauritanian leader, Prime Minister Ahmed Bouceif, is seeking an acceptable way to extricate Mauritania from the dispute. We cannot, however, confirm press reports from Libya and Algeria that Mauritania is preparing unconditionally to cede its portion of Western Sahara to the Polisario. The Mauritanian regime, which has denied the press reports, apparently hopes to achieve disengagement through negotiations within the context of UN-sanctioned self-determination. Bouceif will attempt to preserve good relations with Morocco, but at the same time pursue efforts to restore diplomatic ties with Algeria and expand the dialogue with the Polisario.//

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FRANCE: Military Exercise

French armed forces are conducting major, joint-service maneuvers in a demonstration of French concern that NATO is not paying sufficient attention to the possibility of a threat from the south. Described as the largest French military exercise since World War II, some 17,000 men, 200 airplanes, and 19 ships are participating. Paratroopers and naval commandos from the French overseas intervention force are posing as aggressors in a conventional assault on the west coast of France. An exercise involving at least two armored divisions, to be conducted this fall in the eastern part of France, will most likely evaluate French capabilities against an overland Warsaw Pact attack through the central region.

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SWEDEN: Antiship Missile Decision

//To support its defense industry and maintain employment, Sweden has decided to arm its 12 Spica-class patrol boats with domestically produced antiship missiles in lieu of the US-built Harpoon. The decision upset both naval and air force officials in Sweden who have been seeking to strengthen defenses against a seaborne amphibious assault; the Swedish SAAB-Bofors missile is not likely to satisfy this requirement. The decision to procure a Swedish missile offsets in part the government's recent cancellation of development work on two Swedish jet aircraft.// [redacted]

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WEST GERMANY: Schleswig-Holstein Election

Chancellor Schmidt's coalition parties are likely to unseat the conservative government by a narrow margin in the Schleswig-Holstein state election tomorrow, thus ending 29 years of Christian Democratic rule. The state government's endorsement of nuclear power has become a political liability since the Three Mile Island incident and has been used effectively by the Social Democrats, despite the obvious conflict with the Bonn coalition's pronuclear stance. The Social Democrats are concerned that the environmentalists will be able to pick up enough votes from the issue to get into the state assembly, thus limiting the gains made by the Social Democrats and their partners, the Free Democrats. A victory in Schleswig-Holstein would marginally improve the coalition's position in the upper house in Bonn, which must pass on all key legislation. [redacted]

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PERU: Party Congress Postponed

Victor Raul Haya de la Torre, chief of the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, Peru's largest political party, is reported to have suffered a setback yesterday in his struggle against cancer, forcing an indefinite postponement of the APRA party congress scheduled for 5 to 7 May. At that time, Haya was expected to receive his party's presidential nomination for the election to be held before the restoration of civilian rule planned for 1980. The 84-year-old Haya has been conducting party business from his home since returning on 12 April from the US where he received medical treatment. Haya's relapse underscores the precariousness of the military regime's reliance on its alliance with Haya as the cornerstone of the democratization process and will probably set in motion a vigorous reexamination of political options by the military and the party. [redacted]

ARGENTINA: Labor Protest

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A 24-hour strike called by Argentine trade union leaders yesterday to protest government economic and labor policies was only partially successful. Two principal rail commuter lines serving Buenos Aires were shut down, the port was paralyzed, and more than half the factories in the city's industrial belt were affected, although little effect was felt outside the capital. Bus and subway services were normal, and banks and stores were open. Despite the strike's limited nature--probably owing to the threat of reprisals--union sources say that the strike threat not only prompted the government earlier this week to grant a May wage increase 15 percent larger than expected, but also forced it to reconsider bitterly opposed changes in labor and social welfare legislation. The arrival of prominent international labor figures in Argentina on Thursday to request the release of imprisoned union leaders should put further pressure on the government and encourage beleaguered union organizers. [redacted]

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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

IRAN: Contending Forces

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The inability of Prime Minister Bazargan's government to deal effectively with the numerous problems that have plagued the country since Ayatollah Khomeini's triumph nearly ten weeks ago has resulted in a significant increase in the level of dissatisfaction with the progress of the revolution. There is still wide popular support for the ideal of an Islamic republic, but groups ranging from the radical left to the reactionary right are seeking to capitalize on the growing discontent and are intensifying preparations for an eventual challenge to Khomeini. We lack sufficient information to predict with confidence how the situation may unfold. The government may continue to muddle along for some time, but the situation remains volatile and a relatively minor incident could spark substantial violence between Khomeini's supporters and leftist groups. [redacted]

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The government's problems are becoming increasingly serious:

- The administrative performance of the government is deteriorating as revolutionary committees nominally loyal to Khomeini disrupt operations.
- The nation's police powers are undermined, particularly in Tehran, as neighborhood revolutionary committees in charge of local security continue their arbitrary acts.
- Unemployment now affects some 3 million to 4 million people--about 30 to 40 percent of the labor force.
- Growing commodity shortages and price gouging are adding to the unrest. [redacted]

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Factions within the Islamic movement that were once unwilling publicly to question Khomeini's leadership have begun to voice some criticism of his performance. Major clerical figures, Ayatollahs Taleghani and Shariat-Madari, have become steadily more disenchanted with Khomeini's failure to crack down on unruly members of the committees. Both leaders are wary that opponents of the Islamic movement might exploit their differences with Khomeini, however, and have avoided an open fight with him. They know, moreover, that Khomeini still has massive public support. [redacted]

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The Mujahadin, the Islamic militia organization, is now split into numerous factions. One group openly participated in the recent marches on behalf of Ayatollah Taleghani while another condemned them. A quasi-Marxist faction is also active. [redacted]

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Several politicians are attempting to organize Western-style political parties to compete in promised elections. National Front leader Karim Sanjabi, who recently resigned as foreign minister, is seeking to resuscitate his political group and hopes to run for the presidency. The National Front and other secularist parties will probably attract some support from the middle class, but these groups have always lacked grassroots organization and support. They are now in limbo because the provisional government has postponed indefinitely the election to establish an Islamic regime. [redacted]

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Iran's various dissident ethnic minority groups are incapable of--and uninterested in--taking over the central government, but they are seriously challenging Tehran's authority in the provinces. The Kurds have established virtual autonomy in their areas. None of these groups as yet are overtly secessionist; but those that press, often violently, their demands for extensive autonomy help to perpetuate the country's instability, divert the government's energies, and highlight its weaknesses. [redacted]

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The most significant political force on the left is the Marxist People's Fedayeen. It is based primarily

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among university students but is gaining some support from unemployed workers and the middle class. The group seems content for now to keep pressure on the government in order to force concessions. It is preparing, however, for an eventual armed showdown, and members in Tehran are receiving training on a variety of weapons, including machine guns and mortars. [redacted]

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The pro-Soviet Tudeh Party has been trying for months to infiltrate government and workers' organizations but still appears weak when compared to the armed Mujahadin and the Fedayeen. Although still technically illegal, the party opened offices in the capital last month, and party leader Nur-ed-Din Kianuri returned to Iran this month after many years of exile. He has been careful to set limited public goals for his party and is pushing for a united leftist front. [redacted]

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The government's efforts to enhance public security have been further complicated by attacks on revolutionary militiamen by gangs of youthful relatives of executed supporters of the Shah. Reports reaching the US Embassy indicate that on some recent nights such groups have killed as many as 30 militiamen in retribution for the executions. [redacted]

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Other terrorist organizations seem to be developing. One such group claims credit for the assassination early this week of former armed forces Staff Chief General Qarani. [redacted]

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The assassination of Qarani and the apparent attempt against Bazargan the following day suggest that extremists hope to upset the fragile balance among the contending factions. These incidents will almost certainly prompt the religious hardliners to intensify their efforts to round up "reactionaries." [redacted]

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Bazargan's efforts to establish control are hampered by the lack of reliable security and military forces. Continuing disturbances among the minority groups and mounting pressure from unemployed workers in the cities have prompted the government to make a start at revitalizing the police and military. It has made little progress, and the danger of a collapse into anarchic fighting among the various armed groups remains high. [redacted]

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The indefinite postponement of an election for a constituent assembly is symptomatic of the strains between the religious conservatives and the more moderate leaders in the Islamic movement. [redacted]

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